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SUBJECT: Launch of the DDR Third Phase Program in Ituri

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¶1. (SBU) On July 5 the GDRC launched Phase III of the long-running Ituri Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program in Bunia. It will focus on demobilizing and reintegrating approximately 3,000 ex-combatants from three Ituri armed groups: Cobra Matata's Patriotic Force for Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), Peter Karim's Front for National Integration (FNI), and Mathieu Ngudjolu's Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) (reftel). Vice Minister of Defense Yvonne Iyamulemye Kabano headed the GDRC's delegation. Deputy SRSR Ross Mountain, speaking on behalf of the UN delegation, repeatedly emphasized that this is the final phase of the program, and stressed the need for all weapons held by the militias to be surrendered.

¶2. (SBU) Ngudjolu read a joint declaration on behalf of the three erstwhile rebel leaders, which called for the GDRC "to live up to its commitments," a clear reference to amnesty. Peter Karim was reserved and uncommunicative, and limited his comments to a brief, "We have joined the process." Cobra Matata did not attend. The FARDC reportedly sent a car to bring him to the meeting, but he used it for personal errands instead.

¶3. (SBU) The launch was low-key with moderate attendance and press coverage. In subsequent questions Vice Minister Kabano displayed general unfamiliarity with the DDR process. Overall, the mood was relatively subdued, and the crowd in attendance showed occasional borderline hostility.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: This is the last major push for demobilization of Ituri militias. Many fighters from these three main groups have already gone to Kisangani for brassage and integration into the FARDC. Maintaining the pace of demobilization and reinsertion for those ex-combatants choosing to return to civilian life will require continued engagement by donors. End comment.

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